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AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses and recommends diagnosis and remediation procedures in teaching pupils in the area of reading. The first section of the paper addresses diagnostic emphasis in reading and discusses individualized reading, experience charts, and 5 recommendations for teaching phonics. The next section discusses basal readers, argues that good reading teachers need to use the basal reader in a satisfying way whereby all pupils achieve as optimally as possible and lists 10 achievement goals for teachers using basal readers. The paper then briefly describes traditional linguistic approaches in teaching reading as advocated by Leonard Bloomfield and Charles Fries. It also discusses the initial teaching alphabet and the use of rebus in basal reading series, where illustrations take the place of complex words that pupils usually could not identify. The paper concludes that diagnosis and remediation in reading are needed for pupils to make continuous and sequential progress. (RS)

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by Marlow Ediger

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Diagnosis in Reading, What Direction?

I began my baccalaureate degree program in elementary education in the fall quarter of 1949. Having served as an elementary teacher and principal, I became a professor of methods classes and supervised student teachers and cooperating teachers in the public schools for a thirty year period of time. The purpose of this paper is to discuss and recommend diagnosis and remediation procedures in teaching pupils in the area of reading. The content is based on reading of educational literature and my own personal classroom experiences in the teaching of reading.

Diagnosis in reading has received much emphasis in the educational literature over the last forty years. How much of diagnosis should be stressed in reading instruction? Which specific kinds of pupil errors need to be diagnosed? Does diagnosis destroy interest in reading for ideas on the learner's part? Are there better approaches in teaching to assist pupils to become good readers than the concept of diagnostic teaching?

Diagnostic Emphasis in Reading

With holistic procedures advocated by selected specialists in reading teaching, the question arises as to the degree of diagnosis that should be stressed in helping pupils develop reading skills.

Individualized reading is a form of holism in teaching and learning. Here, the learner chooses a library book to read, from among others. Generally, the pupil will select a book to read that is appealing and interesting. Usually, the chosen library book will be on the reading level of the chooser. Hopefully, each pupil will be able to settle down with reading and completing the library book. If not, the teacher assists those pupils who cannot attend to the reading of a chosen library book.

After, the completion of reading the library book, the involved pupil has a conference with the teacher covering subject matter read in the library book. Questions may be discussed to guide the pupil to

reveal comprehension of content. The pupil might also read a selection from the library book to indicate the quality of word recognition that is in emphasis. Little attention is paid to diagnosing errors in reading with remediation to follow, according to advocates of individualized reading. Individualized reading emphasizes the interests of pupils in selecting and reading sequential library books. These interests will provide a desire to become a good reader. Chosen books by pupils with the interest therein assists learners to wanting to read. Fascinating content in the library books chosen propel pupil achievement and progress in reading. With interest in reading, the pupil, it is believed, will hurdle many difficulties in reading. Holism in reading is stressed rather than parts such as in the case of word analysis involving phonics and syllabication skills.

Reading teachers may modify individualized reading procedures to incorporate the following:

1. emphasize more phonics and other recognition techniques than what individualized reading advocates emphasize.
2. have pupils read for specific information as stated by the teacher to stress comprehension of content.
3. combine a teacher directed and pupil centered approach in the teaching reading.
4. use individualized reading along with other procedures such as basal readers.
5. check for diverse specific comprehension skills in pupil reading.

Developing experience charts with young pupils, in particular, has much to recommend itself as a rather holistic approach in teaching reading. Here, pupils experience an excursion on the school grounds or view objects at an interest center. Following one or both of these activities, pupils present ideas there from for the teacher to print in neat manuscript letters on the chalkboard/transparency or on software with monitor use. Learners then read the content orally as the teacher points to words and phrases. With several readings orally, pupils begin to recognize selected words and they may eventually read the entire

contents independently. If the contents are printed on a flip chart, they can be saved for future use and reading by pupils. An attempt is made here to guide pupils to develop a basic sight vocabulary in reading using whole language approaches and methods of teaching. Comprehension of subject matter in a holistic manner is stressed together with identifying whole words. With each new experience chart, pupils become increasingly proficient in word recognition within the framework of meaningful reading. No background information needs to be developed within pupils, prior to oral reading, since they presented the content for the experience chart using their very own ideas. Generally, little emphasis is placed upon word recognition techniques in the experience chart philosophy of reading instruction. Learners read to obtain ideas and recognize whole words, not specific parts within a word.

I recommend pupils be challenged to make discoveries pertaining to phonics and other word recognition techniques within the framework of experience chart approaches in teaching reading. I have noticed pupils doing the following when given time and encouragement from the reading teacher:

1. finding words in chart that start with a specific letter such as "C".
2. locating words that rhyme.
3. determining words that end with a specific letter such as "s."
4. indicating words that have a short vowel sound such as "e.'
5. showing words that possess a long vowel sound such as the long "a."

I have noticed a high degree of interest in observed pupils who make discoveries in phonics when evaluating student teachers and regular teachers teach in the public schools. As a university supervisor of student teachers, my observations cover a period of thirty years supervising student teachers and cooperating teachers in the public schools. I noticed that phonic discoveries become a game for pupils to play. The enjoyment and participation is there along with pupils reading their very own ideas.

According to may observations, there are pupils, of course, who need phonics to unlock unknown words. Otherwise, these pupils cannot become independent readers. Toward the opposite end of the continuum, I have noticed pupils who read well and are still being taught phonics. This does not make sense. Phonics should be taught as a means only, not an end. Those means are to assist pupils to become better readers in reading independently. A reading teacher needs to be very skillful in diagnosing pupil progress in reading. He/she needs to know when to assist pupils in word recognition techniques and when to permit pupils to read more independently. I would like to make following recommendations in teaching phonics to primary and intermediate grade pupils :

1. listen to pupils read orally and write down specific help that each individual pupil needs in phonics and other word recognition techniques. Based on the study, assistance may be given as necessary. Thus selected pupils need no help whereas others will need considerable assistance.

2. methods used to teach phonics should be varied using inductive and deductive procedures. For inductive teaching, guide pupils to find words in context that have a certain beginning, ending, or medial sound. This activity can be exciting and challenging for pupils. To use deduction, the teacher may select words that pupils have difficulty with and help these learners associate graphemes with phonemes using direct methods of teaching. Phonics teaching should motivate pupils to become better readers, not to stifle interest in reading.

3. involve pupils in determining which words cause difficulties in reading. When pupils are involved in determining what to learn, purpose for learning increases. Plan with learners activities which assist in remedying the inherent difficulties.

4. have pupils keep track of words missed in identification in reading. Each pupil may print these words on three by four inch cards. When a word has been mastered in reading, the card containing the word may be arranged alphabetically. Pupils like to see the number of

cards increase after having mastered the correct identification of words.

5. keep the reading program challenging for all pupils so that each has words that were missed in identification and now need practice in mastering. Content read here by pupils is challenging and yet each pupil can be successful in mastering new words in reading. Growth in reading achievement for each pupil is a must! A quality reading program should not stop with where a learner is presently achieving. There are new and stimulating objectives for each reader to achieve.

A reading program lacks challenge when pupils individually know the correct identification of words without any previous practice or effort. Boredom in reading may then set in. The opposite extreme is to have a reading program which pupils find frustrating and too difficult. There needs to be a happy balance between reading materials that are too complex and pupils learn to dislike reading versus one that is excessively easy and learners fell bored and lack feelings of challenge.

Basal Readers

When reading educational literature on teaching reading, I sometimes get the impression that authors feel using the basal is bad practice. I disagree with this point of view. Certainly, by not using basal readers does not guarantee by any means quality reading instruction. Neither does the use of well selected basal readers guarantee pupil progress. A good reading teacher needs to use the basal reader in a satisfying way whereby all pupils achieve as optimally as possible. The basal reader is neutral, neither good nor bad. The use of quality basal readers, after careful and thoughtful consideration in their adoption, depends upon a capable and inspiring reading teacher.

Basal readers of high quality, have the following to recommend themselves:

1. they do contain objectives for teachers to consider in teaching. Good teachers need to be on the lookout for the best objectives possible in teaching pupils.

2. they contain suggestions for learning activities so that pupils may achieve objectives. I have observed many teachers who have

secured excellent teaching suggestions from the manual section of a basal reader.

3. these learning activities are varied and provide opportunities for pupils to learn to read.

4. there are evaluation procedures for the reading teacher to consider to appraise learner achievement. I have observed teachers who very critically appraise evaluation techniques from the manual section and make necessary adaptations.

5. the manual section suggests, but does not dictate what the teacher is to do.

6. there are review and practice activities for learners. There need to be opportunities for pupils to go over what was missed or did not make sense at a given time in the teaching of reading. A basal reader can provide suggestions here which the teacher may wish to use.

When looking at the above six enumerated items, it is quite obvious that reading teachers need to develop teaching strategies which assist pupils to do as well a possible. The basal reader in and of itself will not assist pupils to become better reader. However, a skillful and dedicated teacher using the basal reader should guide more optimal pupil achievement in learning to read. I believe good reading teachers with basal reader use should achieve the following:

1. Each individual pupil should learn to read as well as possible.

2. an important balance can be maintained here between too much and too little phonics instruction. The reading teacher is the leavening agent in assisting pupils to develop and maintain this balance.

3. the teacher may guide pupils to use additional word recognition techniques such as using illustrations to identify words that appear to not be recognizable.

4. the teacher should assist pupils to consider words that are meaningful when reading an unidentifiable word.

5. the teacher should help pupils to divide words into syllables when this procedure assists learners to recognize what otherwise would be an unknown word.

6. the teacher needs to guide pupils in using structural analysis when attempting to determine what otherwise would be an unknown word.

7. the teacher should judiciously help pupils to use configuration clues by noticing how the shape and form of one word differs from another in most cases. Some words are longer or shorter than others. Some have taller letters as compared to other words. Words such as "house" and "horse" have the same configuration, but that tends to be a rarely among words in the English language.

8. the teacher should assist pupils to read in thought units, not in a jerky manner in pronouncing sequential words. For example, if a pupil should read in irrational phrases such as the following: "Jim/ walked away from/ the crowd," learners will lose interest and meaning in reading. Rather the involved pupils should read: Jim walked away/ from the crowd.

9. the teacher should guide pupils to read with anticipation as to what should come next when reading a story or other subject matter content. The anticipation and responding to it helps pupils to stay on track in terms of reading what the author has in mind in sequential ideas. Word calling by pupils without concentrating on the content read should be avoided. If pupils engage in word calling, the content should be chosen on the pupils own reading level, not the frustrational level of reading.

10. the teacher needs to diagnose if pupils substitute words for the actual words contained in context, or if the learner adds words that are not contained in the reading selection. These deficiencies together with deletions may not matter when pupils are comprehending what has been written by the author. The substitutions, additions, and deletions do matter when pupils secure incorrect information during the act of reading.

Thus I do not feel and believe that basal reader use is negative. I do not believe we should do away with the basal readers in terms of teaching reading. Basal readers can be used wisely as well as unwisely. A good teacher needs to adapt basal reader use in helping each pupil

learn as much as possible. Basal readers may be used with library books in teaching reading. They may also be used with experience charts, individualized reading, and linguistic procedures. There is no reason whey the best of any program of reading instruction may not be used collectively with other approaches. The goals of all reading programs is to guide learners to progress to become independent readers.

Linguistic Approaches

I would like to briefly mention traditional linguistic approaches in teaching reading as advocated by Leonard Bloomfield and Charles Fries. From my observations as university supervisor of student teachers and cooperating teachers, very few used this approach. There were teacher education textbooks in the 1980s that spent considerable time in stressing its merits as well as demerits. Bloomfield and Fries stressed pupils learning to read in terms of patterns of words and sentences. It is difficult to write sentences using a patterns approach for any age level. The following are examples:

1. man can fan. This involves the "an" family of words. There are a considerable number of words that pattern from this family. However, as one pupil remarked in class "Who talks that way?"

2. Bill will fill pill. The meaning within the sentence is indeed very vague. Many words are needed in any sentence that do not pattern. Such commonly used words are: the, that, those, this, that, who, how, and when, among others. If one would read, "Bill will swallow the pill," then meaningful reading is possible. However, the words "swallow" and "the" do not pattern with each other nor with the other words in the sentence.

I observed one classroom, in particular, where the student teacher and the cooperating teacher used traditional linguistic approaches as recommended by Bloomfield and Fries. Here, pupils studied sentences such as the following which had patterned and unpatterned words therein:

Mat can pat the fat cat. the word "can" does not pattern with the other words in the sentence. However, meaningful reading is possible in showing the subject/ predicate/ direct object pattern of sentence.

Bloomfield and Fries did not stress a phonics approach in teaching reading. The above named student and cooperating teacher whom I supervised in the public schools stressed phonics in these sentences to show words that are spelled consistently with a grapheme/ phoneme consistency. They also used the patterns approach to show the kinds of sentences that have been identified in English such as the subject/ predicate/ direct object pattern as well as others. These teachers realized the limits in using this approach such as a lack of complete meaning in many sentences, the lack of variety in words that can be used in traditional linguistic approaches, and the forced use of words to develop a patterns approach in reading instruction. I suggest that if patterning approaches are used to supplement them with other more meaningful procedures of holism in teaching reading.

In diagnosing pupil progress in reading instruction using a patterns approach in part, pupils with teacher guidance may notice the following:

1. how reading errors occur due to a lock of consistency between symbol and sound.
2. how irregularly spelled words might cause errors in word identification.

The above enumerated items may be noticed too in individualized reading, experience chart approaches, and basal reading procedures of instruction.

Patterning in teaching pupils does have merit in spelling since linguistic elements need to be studied by pupils in noticing a structure of the English language. Thus in spelling textbooks, there may be units of study on a weekly basis which emphasize the following:

1. words that end in "s."
2. words that contain short vowel or long vowel sounds.
3. words that have are regularly spelled or words that are

irregularly spelled.

4. words that posses one syllable or words that contain two syllables. Multiple syllable words containing three or more syllables may also be studied by pupils in spelling.

5. words that possess imagery.

6. words which rhyme.

The above enumerated items provide ways of grouping words in teaching spelling whereby pupils may perceive linguistic elements in learning to spell.

Rebus in Reading Instruction

During the 1970's, several of my student and cooperating teachers I supervised in the public schools, used rebus contained in a basal reading series. They also developed their very own rebus materials in teaching pupils in the area of reading. With rebus, illustrations took the place of complex words that pupils usually could not identify. I would not rule out rebus entirely, even today. But, like all programs of reading instruction, it had limitations. Perhaps for young readers, it has the most advantages. Thus for primary grade pupils, the following recommendations are in order:

1. the illustrations must be very clear in terms of the individual picture taking the place of a complex word in context. Learners should not need to guess what the illustration stands for. Nor should the teacher be asked what it is. If this is the case, then the abstract word might as well be there instead of the picture.

2. these pictures cannot stand for or take the place of such common words in reading as the following: the, when, then, how, and should, among others.

I wish to address here, numerous problems involved in teaching reading. Many reading experts have attempted to offer suggestions on how to make the act of reading easier for children when there are so many word spelled in an inconsistent manner, i.e. though, bough,

through, thought, cough, rough, and dough. These words all contain the "ough" letters and yet notice how the pronunciation varies greatly from one word to the next. Is it any wonder that a phonics approach in teaching reading might work up to a point?

The Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) came in with a bang in the early 1960's and left in popularity with a bang a few years later. ITA is quite consistent in grapheme/ phoneme relationships with its forty-four symbols. A big problem with ITA was the transitions first or second grade pupils made from ITA to our 26 traditional letters in English reading and spelling.

From my own elementary school teaching experiences and from what my student and cooperating teachers indicate is that sound/ symbol relationships are not the only way pupils learn to read, by any means. Thus a pupil may learn to identify the word "bicycle" in print not because of it being irregularly spelled but because of the meaning and enjoyment attached to that word. There are so many variables attached as to why pupils learn to read that phonics instruction is not the only key to word recognition. To be sure regularly spelled word assist all pupils in learning to read more rapidly and effectively. These close relationships between grapheme and phonemes indeed guide pupils to lean upon consistency between symbol and sound in identifying words. However, the English language does not provide this consistency now or in the future.

In Summary

Pupils need the best reading curriculum possible. The objectives should be attainable. Learning opportunities in reading should assist learners in goal attainment. Evaluation procedures should be such that pupils reveal the kinds of progress made. Diagnosis and remediation in reading are needed in order for the pupil to make continuous and sequential progress.